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CURRENT SUPPORT MEMORANDUM

IMPROVEMENT OF WATER TRANSPORTATION ON THE HUAI RIVER

OFFICE OF RESEARCH AND REPORTS

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

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~~SECRET~~IMPROVEMENT OF WATER TRANSPORTATION ON THE HUAI RIVER

Work has been underway since 1951 on a large-scale, multipurpose scheme for developing the water resources of the Huai River. The plan, intended for completion in 1962, includes flood control, irrigation, power generation and navigation. It envisages the construction of 27 reservoirs and allied works, while dredging and lock building will make 3,900 kilometers of the river navigable to powered vessels. 1/ By 1957, seven of the reservoirs had been completed and 1,642 kilometers of the Huai system were navigable, 975 kilometers by steamboat. 2/ Work is underway on a direct water connection between the Hui Chi, a tributary of the Huai, and the Yellow River. 3/ A second canal is being dug between Hungtze Lake and the Yellow Sea, this one to terminate at Lienyun Harbor. 4/ More recently, work has begun on a long-range program to reconstruct the Grand Canal, formerly one of the major inland water routes in the nation. Announced plans call for a considerable realignment of the canal and for dredging it to a depth sufficient for 2,000-ton barges. 5/ When completed, the canal will provide a northerly outlet to Peiping and Tientsin for the Huai River navigation system, which is already linked with the lower Yangtze to the south.

The Huai River now ranks fifth among the rivers of China in terms of navigable distance, being exceeded only by the Yangtze, Yellow (Huang Ho), Pearl (Chu Chiang) and Sungari Rivers. It is the principal inland waterway between the Yangtze and Yellow Rivers, and its connections with these rivers and the existing sketches of the Grand Canal constitute an extensive waterway system serving Honan, Anhwei and Kiangsu provinces.

Traffic at the present time is carried in a variety of vessels. An undetermined number of passenger steamers, tugs, motorized junks, and wooden sailing vessels have been reported operating on the Huai, but it is impossible to determine the total tonnage. It is known, however, that over 1,900 junks were operating on the river in 1953. 6/ The only known route in operation on the Huai, from Pengpu to Shanghai, by way of the Grand Canal, involves only the lower reaches of the river. Partial figures suggest that approximately 60,000 tons of freight were carried on this section of the river in 1956. 7/ Considering that only a portion of the river is covered by this route and that junk traffic is probably excluded from the total, it is possible that it represents only about one-fifth the total volume of traffic actually moved. If so more than 300,000 tons of cargo were moved by modern water transportation on the Huai in 1956. Some two to three percent of the total volume of cargo moved by inland water transportation in China was carried on the Huai.

It is probably true that the Huai will have a deeper and more stable channel as a result of the Huai River project, and that the lakes to be created will facilitate water transportation. However, the series of locks which will be necessary will increase operating time considerably. The deeper channel will allow larger and more modern vessels to be used, and it may be expected that more will be added to the river fleet. It seems likely, however, that composition of traffic on the Huai will remain essentially as it is now; agricultural products, mainly grain and cotton, will constitute most of the downstream traffic while manufactured goods will move upstream. However, if current plans for industrial development in the area, which include a 50,000-ton steel plant and a 400,000-ton chemical fertilizer plant, materialize, industrial products will make up a growing portion of the short-haul traffic on the system. Coal mining, already an important activity in the basin, is due for further expansion.

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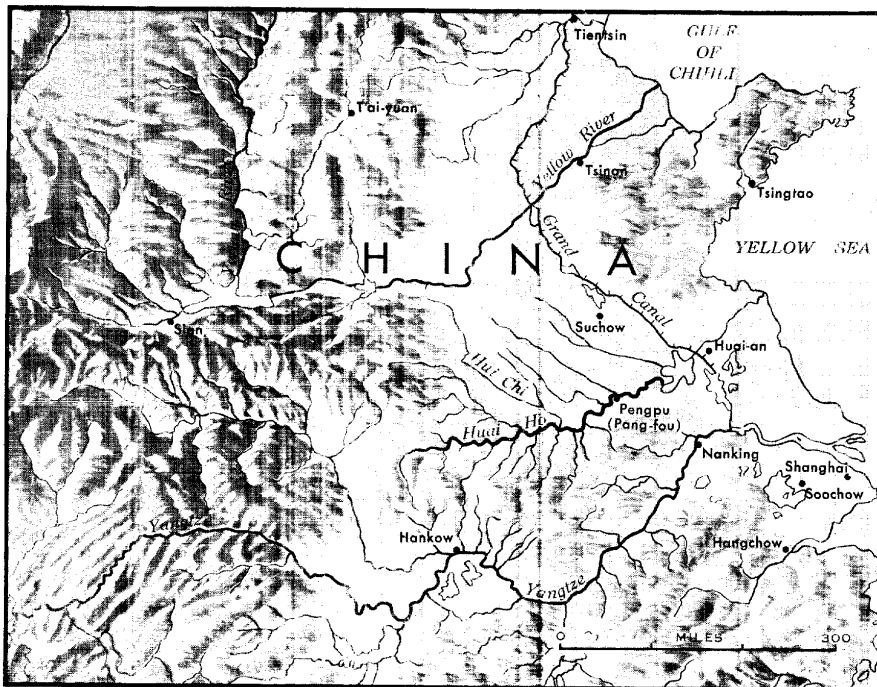
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Increased yields from irrigated acreage and the simultaneous development of local mining and industrial activity will result in a significant increase in volume of traffic on the Huai and its tributaries, but the magnitude of the increase cannot be estimated at this time.

A significant aspect of the Huai development program from the point of view of water transportation is that a significant part of the increased potential transport capacity of the river comes as a result of the other aspects of the program, and thus relatively little of the total investment can be charged directly to water transportation.



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